1973

Isonomia: The Greek idea of freedom

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ISONOMIA - THE GREEK IDEA OF FREEDOM

By

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B.A., Purdue University, 1971

Presented in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
1973

Approved By:

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July 24, 1973
Date

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7-27-73

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sometime during the sixth century B.C., isonomia became a political slogan of the common people of Athens and other Greek cities.[1] When the common people called for isonomia, they seemed to be saying that the law should become communal. "The law was now the common property of all the citizens,"[2] said Fustel de Coulanges after describing the rise of the common people. Isonomia was the slogan used against the rule of the noble classes. Isonomia translated means "equality before the law." It must be seen as part of the general movement from aristocracy to democracy in archaic Greece.

> Against the rule of the nobility the urge towards equality among the citizens that was inherent in the concept of the polis steadily gained ground.[3]

The common people who desired this equality of political rights felt they could get it through equality before the law.

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[1]M. I. Finley, The Ancient Greeks (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), p. 42.

[2]Fustel de Coulanges, The Ancient City (Garden City: Doubleday), p. 308.

[3]Victor Ehrenberg, The Greek Way (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1960), p. 49.

The lower classes had been previously shut out from the political realm.[4] During the Mycenaean and Homeric ages they had been ruled by kings and nobles. The rulers were originally priest-kings, not only holding political power, but religious power as well. One of the reasons the lower classes did not have political rights was that they had no religion of their own. But as they acquired a worship, they gained political rights also.

> The multitudes, previously without a worship, thenceforth had religious ceremonies, and festivals. They could pray; this, in a society where religion made the dignity of a man, was a great deal.[5]

The people, now with a worship, felt strong; for they dared enter the city, the sacred polis, where they had long been forbidden. They won themselves religious freedom, and subsequently, political freedom. They entered the public life of the city and "the result was everywhere the same; the inferior classes entered the city, and became a part of the body politic."[6] The slogan for this movement was equality before the law, isonomia, and with it they attempted to gain full political rights. The

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[4]Fustel de Coulanges, The Ancient City, p. 274.

[5]Ibid., p. 275.

[6]Ibid.

thought which this movement generated is the subject of this paper.

The fact is that hardly any student of political thought has even heard of the term isonomia, and those that have go no further at an explanation than to translate it from the Greek into the English. Even Plato, who wrote only a generation after it was a fundamental concept to Greek thought, hardly even mentions it. The problem of the paper then is, first, to interpret the term isonomia in the light of such fundamental political concepts as rule, law, and action. Secondly, it is important to learn the fundamental political concepts in the way the Greeks understood them before Plato. In the absence of systematic political theory, one begins to approach these concepts by the rediscovery of political language found in the poetry, the plays, and the histories of classical Greece; we need to read the literature of a generation, and not just the works of the first political theorist. Most political scientists do not understand isonomia because they do not possess the concepts by which to understand it. The original political thought of Greece has been lost, and it is the purpose of this paper to attempt a recovery of it in the literature of the ancient Greeks before Plato.

The most obvious interpretation of isonomia is a literal translation from the Greek into English. Isonomia translates as "equality before the law;" from the roots "isos" which means equality and from "nomos" which means law.[7] Traditionally, Victor Ehrenberg, Donald Kagan and others claim that isonomia expressed the political ideal which became institutionalized into democracy.[8] Ehrenberg in his Greek State says of isonomia:

> Against tyranny and against the oligarchic rule of the rich families was raised the plain demand for isonomia which--whether as 'equality of distribution' or 'equality before the law'--became the expressive symbol of a democratic constitution.[9]

Certainly the traditional interpretation has its support from ancient Greek sources. Equality was obviously an important idea to the democratic Greeks, for Greek literature is filled with references to its virtues. Demosthenes, a democratic Greek orator, praises Athenian law because it was equal for all.

> It forbids the introduction of any law that does not affect all citizens alike. As everyman has an equal share in the constitution, so this statue asserts his equal share in the law.[10]

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[7]Gregory Vlastos, "Isonomia," American Journal of Philogy, Vol. 79, 1954, p. 173.

[8]Donald Kagan, Sources in Greek Political Thought (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 75.

[9]Ehrenberg, The Greek State, p. 51.

[10]Demosthenes, Against Timocrates (as quoted in Kagan, Sources), p. 37.

Pericles is made to say by Thucydides, during the famous funeral oration, "If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice for all."[11]

We can well understand from these short quotations that isonomia meant "equality before the law." As Donald Kagan has said, "Isonomia has several shades of meaning, but at the very least it meant equality before the law."[12] And if we understand law to mean "rules governing actions," then it is no wonder that the term "isonomia" has dropped out of sight, for modern democracies all profess a belief in equality before the law, at least as an operational ideal. But if Hannah Arendt's view of isonomia is correct, we see a form of government rather than an operational ideal, and it is a form of government contradicted by modern democracies.

Hannah Arendt's interpretation of the term isonomia is linked with the notion of "no-rule."[13] Most political theorists, Arendt claims, operate under the assumption "that every political community consists of those who rule and those who are ruled;"[14] and this has been going on since

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[11]Thucydides (ii, 37.1)

[12]Kagan, Sources, p. 77.

[13]Hannah Arendt, On Revolution (New York: Viking Press, Inc., 1963), pp. 22-23.

[14]Ibid.

Plato and Aristotle. One of the problems with traditional interpretations is that they look at isonomia through this notion of rule. Where others see isonomia as leading to democracy, as majority rule or the domination of lower class over the upper class, Arendt describes isonomia as creating "no-rule," or cooperation of all people regardless of class.

Arendt's discussion of isonomia is found in a passage on political freedom. While freedom has been an obscure term at best and has come to be associated with nonpolitical activities that a given body politic will protect,[15] for the ancient Greeks freedom was a political phenomenon; it allowed the citizens to participate in political activities.

> Since Herodotus, freedom was understood as a form of political organization in which the citizens lived together under conditions of no-rule, without a division between rulers and ruled. This notion of no-rule was expressed by the word isonomia.[16]

Freedom was for the ancient Greeks a solid political idea, where freedom meant to be free _to_ participate in political activities, instead of being free _from_ political activities. The _polis_ (city-state) was to be an "isonomy," a space of

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[15] _Ibid._

[16] _Ibid._

no-rule rather than a democracy, a space for majority rule.[17]

Hannah Arendt has some support in Walter Jones' book on Greek legal theory. Though Jones agrees that isonomia was not concerned with rule, he goes back to the traditional approach in the end. Jones comes close to Arendt's interpretation, when he says, "It was not rule, even by the people which was the objective, so much as the equality in and through the law which was thought to be inseparable from it--the isonomia."[18]

Arendt, too, seems to have the support of classical sources. Euripides, in his Suppliant Maidens, has Theseus, the legendary founder of Athenian democracy, speak these words:

> This city is free, and ruled by no one man
> The people reign in annual succession.
> They do not yield power to the rich;
> The poor man has an equal share in it.[19]

A discussion by the Perisan generals in Herodotus' history centers around the varied forms of government, which by general assent are defined as rule by one, rule by few, and rule by many. Otanes, the spokesman for rule by many,

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[17]Herodotus, The Persian Wars (iii, 80-83).

[18]Jon Jones, The Law and Legal Theory of the Greeks (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 86.

[19]Euripides, Suppliant Maidens, lines 405-408.

which is here called isonomia ("the rules by many, on the other hand has the fairest of names, isonomia")[20] is offered a kingdom but refuses. He answers:

> Now as I have neither a mind to rule or be ruled
> I shall not enter the lists with you in this matter.
> I withdraw on one condition--none of you shall
> exercise rule over me or my seed forever.[21]

The rest agreed to these terms, and Herodotus claims that to that day the family of Otanes remained the only free house in Persia. These two sources demonstrate the connection between no-rule and freedom that was felt to exist in Greek thought.

It is important to understand the differences between these ideas of rule and no-rule. One interpretation of isonomia includes the idea of rule, that is that all political communities must be divided into those who rule and those who are ruled. The value of rule according to this view is that it allows men to escape the chaotic nature of political action, into the order imposed by a ruler.

> The concept of rule is the notion that men can lawfully and politically live together only when some are entitled to command and others to obey.[22]

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[20]Herodotus (iii, 80-83).

[21]Ibid.

[22]Arendt, On Revolution, p. 21.

Without this rule there is a chaotic state which is to be avoided. The cost, however, is political freedom. To escape its uncertainty some wish to find a substitute for the action of the people in public. The substitute was for one or a few to rule and for the rest to mind their own business while obeying the ruler's commands.

Some of the ancient Greeks felt that within a political community no one should rule or be ruled. Those people who believed in isonomia claimed that it was best for "men to be ruled by none."[23] It was thought that where there was rule there was no state at all. Sophocles wrote, for example, that "a one man state is no state at all."[24] Likewise, according to Aristotle,

> . . . in a group whose members are equal and peers it is neither expedient nor just that one man should rule over others.[25]

Though Aristotle wrote several generations after the time of Sophocles, he was writing about the same kind of no-rule.

If most interpretations of isonomia claim that it leads to democracy, as majority rule, they seem to be missing the whole point of what the political space was

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[23]Aristotle, Politics, 1288a2.

[24]Sophocles, Antigone, trans. Paul Roche (New York: New American Library, 1958), p. 189.

[25]Aristotle, Politics, 1288a2.

all about. As Arendt says, rule belonged in the private realm, not in the public. It was equality before the law that was important in the public realm, and Greek law was originally only a public affair.[26] Isonomia can thus be seen as an attempt to give the whole citizen body equal political rights of participation, not an attempt at majority rule. Rule was to be absent from the political space altogether. The political space was to be, as Arendt says, a space for freedom, which she claims meant no-rule.

My method is to read much of the literature of the ancient Greeks, with political eyes trained by Ms. Arendt. Aristotle's works are included in my primary sources because I sense a strong historical legacy in his writings which reflect the political thought of the Greeks generations before his time. Most of my sources are the plays and poetry of the ancient Greeks. The problem was whether they were giving me a true idea of the political thought of the time I was studying. It always appears at first glance that Greek political thought must be approached through Plato and his pupil, Aristotle. There are others besides myself who think otherwise. Edith Hamilton, in

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[26]Arendt, On Revolution, p. 61.

her book, The Greek Way, wrote "the dramatists' task was to interpret and express the great communal emotion."[27] The playwright and the poet express in prose and poetry what is happening around them. The artist perceives the life and thought of his culture and presents it in art form.

It is not necessary to assume that political thought began with Plato and Aristotle. This approach to Greek political thought leaves out an abundance of literature that can be considered. Many of these literary sources date generations before Plato wrote his first works. Donald Kagan, in his Sources in Greek Political Theory, uses the same kind of argument when he writes,

> All too often the study of our subject begins and ends with Plato and Aristotle. It is my hope to call attention to works less frequently considered and thus correct the distortion caused by this approach, giving us a clearer and truer picture of what the Greeks thought.[28]

By considering the plays and poetry of the Greeks, much of it written before the time of Plato and Aristotle, an old dimension is again added to the study of the thought of the Greeks.

The argument of this paper can be seen as progressing through various stages, from the realm of the household,

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[27]Ehrenberg, The Greek Way, p. 180.

[28]Kagan, Sources, P. vii.

before the polis, to a time when the polis was fundamental to Greek life. First, the way of the private realm will be discussed. Next, we will discuss what set off the private from the public realm. Finally, we will discuss what went on in the public realm that was unique to it. As the argument progresses, the metaphor of law as a wall or boundary marker will be seen as central to the thesis. The private realm, characterized by violence, existed outside the walls of law, as it were, where equality before the law, or no-rule was not possible. The polis, on the other hand, was enclosed by this wall-like law. It shut out the violence and inequality of the private realm and enclosed a space for free speech and equality of political rights.

Tyranny rested on the reduction of these walls to enclose only the tyrant and his lackeys; isonomia attempted to enlarge these walls to enclose all the citizens. Within the space enclosed by law, political action was to take place. Under a tyranny then only the tyrant was able to act, but under isonomia all citizens were free to participate in political action.

CHAPTER II

THE POLIS AND THE HOUSEHOLD

> Nobody complains about the fog. I know why now: as bad as it is, you can slip back in it and feel safe. He keeps trying to drag us out of the fog, out in the open, where we'd be easy to get at.
>
> It's like that big red hand of McMurphy's is reaching into the fog, and dropping down and dragging men up by their hands, dragging them blinking into the open. First one, then another, then the next. Right on down the line of Acutes, dragging them out of the fog, till there they stand, all twenty of them, raising not just against watching TV but against her trying to send McMurphy to Disturbed, against the way she's talked and acted and beat them down for years.--Ken Kesey

The ancient Greek town evolved into a community which consisted of two separate parts. Within this community there existed both a space for private needs, such as food, clothing and shelter, and for public needs, such as being seen and heard by others. The private space, the household, was the secure space within which to satisfy the biological necessities of life. The public space drew the people out of the seclusion and fear of the dark places of the household, into the light of day and the new reality received by appearing before others. The household, which was characterized by rule and inequality, became contrasted to the public space characterized by no-rule and equality.

Historically the household came first. Aristotle wrote that a "polis is constituted by the association of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficient existence."[1] The freemen of the families and villages began to meet in assemblies in public which evolved into the polis. The polis was to give the Greek a space for political action. While the household had given the Greek father the necessities for his family's life, it had kept him separated from others. The polis evolved into a space where men could come together, free from necessities.

The household represented some kind of physical structure, in which each unit was separated from each other. Such household was, to a high degree, self-sufficient,[2] and, therefore, isolated from other households. Because of this physical structure, the household was a private space, not to be interfered with by outsiders.

Private space, the life of the household, was the space for the activities necessary for the survival of the species. This space was a pre-political place, where men lived together because they were driven by their wants and needs. Each household was responsible for the biological

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[1]Aristotle, Politics, 1255b6.

[2]Ehrenberg, The Greek State, p. 12.

needs of food, clothing and shelter for its members.[3] The household was a place of necessity where man labored and worked with his tools. Here the slaves and free workers grew grain and built shelters and made cloth.

Members of the household were not equal, but in a master-slave relationship which, as Aristotle explains, is a "ruling and being ruled which not only belongs to the category of things necessary, but also to that of things expedient."[4] The inequality present in the household was felt to be the correct way to run the household. The master ruled over his household because it was necessary for the survival of the family. Force was seen as the only way to master necessity. The driving force in the household was life itself, and not any kind of "higher" objective. Being on a survival level, life in the household was ruled by necessity, where force and violence were seen as the only means to master the necessities of life--for instance, by ruling over slaves and to become free. Force and violence were used to "liberate oneself from the necessities of life for the freedom of the world."[5] Once the necessities of life had been mastered, the freemen of the polis could meet together in the common world of things.

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[3]See Aristotle, Politics. Book I, ch. 3-9 for a discussion of the household.

[4]Ibid. 1254a2.

[5]Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 30.

The household was the space for rule. According to Fustel de Coulangee, all Greek and Latin words which express some rulership over others, such as rex, pater, anax, basileus, refer originally to household relationships and were names the slaves gave to their masters.[6] The whole concept of rule was felt to have been born within the household, where necessity ruled the lives of the people and the master ruled over his slaves to provide those things necessary for survival. As Arendt puts it:

> the whole concept of rule and being ruled, of government and power in the sense in which we understand them, was felt to be prepolitical and to belong in the private rather than the public sphere.[7]

The public sphere was the realm of freedom, where the freemen met together to speak and act on common problems, but only after they had mastered the necessities of life, which they did by the prepolitical means of ruling over their households.

What was characteristic of life in the household is reflected by Hesiod and Thucydides, who stress the violence, strife, and uncertainty of private life. Hesiod describes the pre-polis experience in the form of a fable.

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[6]Coulanges, The Ancient City, pp. 89, 228.

[7]Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 32.

This is what the hawk said when he had caught a
nightingale
With spangled neck in his claws and carried her
high among the clouds
She, spotted on the clawhooks was wailing pitifully
But the hawk, in his masterful manner, gave her an
answer:
"What is the matter with you? Why scream? Your
master has you.
You shall go wherever I take you, for all your
singing.
If I like, I can let you go. If I like, I can
eat you for dinner.
He is a fool who tries to match his strength with
the stronger.
He will lose his battle, and with shame will be
hurt also."
So spoke the hawk, the bird who flies so fast on
his long wings.[8]

Thucydides tells us that outside the walls of the polis, that is, outside the realm of politics, "the strong did what they could, and the weak did what they must."[9] The private realm

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[8]Hesiod,"Works and Days" as taken from Kagan, Sources.

[9]Thucydides, The Pelopennesians War (ii, 34-38).

was characterized by this use of force. Might made right. Some people were seen and saw themselves as superior to others, just as the hawk was superior to the nightingale. The master was to have complete control.

While the households were separated from each other, they were also separated from the public space. What was private was to be isolated from what was public, or common to all. The polis on the other hand,

> gives each individual his due place in the political cosmos, and thereby gives him, besides his private life, a sort of second life, his 'bios politikos.' Now every citizen belongs to two orders of existence; and there is a sharp distinction between what is 'his own' and what is 'communal.' Man is not only 'idiotic,' he is also 'politic.' As well as his own ability in his profession or trade, he has his share in the universal ability of the citizen by which he is fitted to cooperate and sympathize with the rest of the citizens in the life of the polis.[10]

This separation divided the life of survival from the political life of the citizen. On one side was the freeman's private life and on the other was the public life, each with its own special function. Furthermore, each citizen was equal in his ability to cooperate and participate in the action of the polis.

Though the household was prepolitical, the polis could not have existed without it. "The realm of the polis

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[10]Werner Jaegar, Paideai, Vol. I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 108.

was the sphere of freedom, and if there was a relationship between these two spheres it was a matter of course that the mastering of the necessities of life in the household was the condition for the freedom of the polis."[11] The household, in effect, created an abundance of things, which allowed the master of a household to devote his life to the time-consuming activities of public life. Fustel de Coulanges, in distinction from other writers, stresses the time-consuming activities demanded from the ancient citizen, rather than his leisure time.[12] This supports Aristotle's statement that no man who was primarily concerned with the necessities of life could be a citizen. Without the household to support him, the citizen would have had to work for a living, rather than devote full time to public life. But freed from necessities, the Greek citizen could participate in the political community.

The Greeks recognized that without the polis man could not be free, or even raise himself above other animals and be truly human. The frailty of the human condition in its private manistestations was to be alleviated by the polis, the political space proper.

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[11]Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 30.

[12]Coulanges, The Ancient City, p. 335.

> The original, prephilosophical Greek remedy for this frailty, had been the foundation of the polis. The polis as it grew out of and remained rooted in the Greek pre-polis experience and estimate of what makes it worthwhile for men to live together, namely the 'sharing of words and deeds' had a two-fold function.[13]

The polis allowed a man to appear before others and through his words and deeds to show who he was in his unique distinctness. The polis also was a remedy for the hazards of action. While action in the private realm was usually dangerous and often fruitless, action in the polis could help the freeman gain control over his life. By coming together, the Greeks realized that they were all equal in their ability to cooperate and reach decisions on common problems; and this set them apart from other animals and made them free.

The Greeks felt that the polis was a natural association for men; as Aristotle tells us, "It is evident that the polis belongs to the class of things that exist by nature, and that man is by nature an animal intended to live in a polis."[14] However, it was still men's actions, their words and deeds, which generated the space which was the polis. The polis was a space generated by the freemen who spoke with each other. Thucydides tells us, "It is the men that

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[13]Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 196.

[14]Aristotle, Politics, 1253a9.

are the polis,"[15] by which he meant that the polis was a space which evolved when men came together and spoke on common problems.

What set man apart from other animals, and made him an animal capable of living in a polis, was his capacity for speech. Arendt argues that "to live in a polis meant that everything was transacted in words and persuasion."[16] Speech allowed man to escape the realm of force and violence, the prepolitical household. Indeed, political action was speech; and it was his ability to speak along with his ability to form political associations that set man apart from other animals. Man was not only zoon politikon, he was also zoon logon ekhon (a living being capable of speech).[17]

The polis was the space set aside for political action. As Aristotle tells us, "it is for the sake of good actions and not for the sake of private life, that the political association must be considered to exist."[18] When the citizens came together they were to interact with each other which meant that they only had to deal with each other as fellow human beings, without any physical structure

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[15]Thucydides (ii, 34-38).

[16]Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 26.

[17]Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1142a25 and 1178a6.

[18]Aristotle, Politics, 1280b14.

separating each individual. They came together to speak about the common world of things and to persuade one another in a public space.

The polis was a space where men met as equals. Aristotle tells us, "the members of a political association aim by their very nature at being equal, and differing in nothing."[19] When these freemen got together in the space generated by their words and deeds, they did so as equals. Within the polis there was no-rule, because the citizens naturally aimed at equality. No one could rule the others if they differed in nothing.

In Aristotle's discussion of the differences between the authority of the master of the household and the authority of the statesman, it is made clear that the members of a polis were to be free and equal.

> The argument makes it clear that the authority of the master and that of the statesman are different from one another, and that it is not the case that all kinds of authority are, as some thinkers hold, identical. The authority of the statesman is exercised over men who are naturally free; that of the master over men who are slaves; and again the authority generally exercised over a household by its head is that of a monarch, while the authority of the statesman is an authority over freemen and equals.[20]

The polis was not only a natural association in itself, but

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[19] Ibid., 1259a2.

[20] Ibid., 1255a9.

it was also natural for the members of the polis to be equal with one another in their capacity to speak together.

It required a degree of selflessness when these people came together in the polis. If there was to be equality and freedom it would demand a strong community spirit. This spirit of selflessness would have been allowed by the religious foundations of the polis. Fustel de Coulanges tells us that "the foundation of the city was always a religious act."[21] The various families and tribes which joined together in a polis "never failed to light a sacred fire and to adopt a common religion."[22] The common religion resulted in public rites and sacrifices, and some instances, in common meals. The religious city taught the individual freeman to come together in public places; to remove himself from the private realm, and to share common activities with his peers. The individual was not the important entity, but the assembly of freeman as a whole.

The important thing here is that the common religion of the polis taught the citizens a degree of selflessness; to put the whole before the individual for the common good of all. This did not mean that the individual held no importance, (each family had its own sacred rites), it just

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[21]Coulanges, The Ancient City, p. 133.

[22]Ibid., p. 127.

meant that the citizens should cooperate with one another.

This selflessness and cooperation led to the freedom and equality, the no-rule of the polis, but the experience was something entirely different in the private realm. Other forms of association developed, such as tyranny, which were contrary to the ideal of the polis. The ideal of the polis, as Arendt claims, was the freedom and equality of isonomia. Within the polis all were to be free and equal in their capacity to speak with one another. Tyranny, on the other hand, was an escape from this uncertainty of action, into the stability and order of rule, where only one man made the choices of right and wrong and the people conformed to these rules. Arendt says that rule rests on a suspicion of action, and arose from the desire to find a substitute for action.[23] This substitute for action was found in the rule of the household. Tyranny extended the rule of the household to the rest of the outside world. Where the polis and household had been separated in space and function, tyranny destroyed this separation and made the whole community one big household.

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[23]Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 122.

CHAPTER III

TYRANNY

> Right at your balls. No, that nurse ain't some kind of a monster chicken, buddy, what she is is a ball-cutter. I've seen a thousand of 'em, old and young, men and women. Seen 'em all over the country and in the homes--people who try to make you weak so they can get you to tow the line, to follow their rules, to live like they want you to.--Ken Kesey

Tyranny and oligarchy (the rule of one or the rule of few) were based on the rule of a master over his household. The whole idea of rule was linked to life in the household. Whether a master over his slaves, or a tyrant over his subjects, rulers forced people to do certain tasks. Arendt argues:

> In Greek self-understanding, to force people by violence, to command rather than persuade, were prepolitical ways to deal with people characteristic of life outside the polis, of home and family life, where the household head ruled with uncontested despotic powers, or of life in the barbarian empires of Asia, whose despotism was frequently linked to the organization of the household.[1]

Under a tyranny the citizens could not come together as free and equal individuals to speak on political matters.

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[1]Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 26.

The tyrant ruled over the citizens and permitted no interference from others. While in the polis all were equal, tyranny, as in the household, harbored the strictest inequality.

Tyranny and oligarchy forced upon the people a certain set of rules by which to live; such as all the drudgeries of a city, while excluding them from the good things of a city--for example, the political activity of speaking in public. Athenagoras, a spokesman for the democratic party, is reported by Thucydides to have said:

> But members of the same state ought in justice to receive the same rights. But I say what is meant by the demos, or people, is the whole state, whereas an oligarchy is only a sector of the state; and I say next that though the rich are the best for looking after the money, the best counsellors are the intelligent, and that it is the many who are best at listening to the different arguments and judging between them. And all alike, whether taken all together or as separate classes, have equal rights under a democracy. An oligarchy on the other hand, certainly gives the many their share of dangers, but when it comes to the good things in life not only claims the largest share, but goes off with the whole lot.[2]

Life under a tyranny became merely a matter of survival for most of the people. Their life only involved those pre-political activities concerned with the necessities of life, whereas they were denied the political activity of speaking together about the common world of things. The tyrant or the oligarchs ruled over the people by force,

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[2]Thucydides (vi, 38-41).

and thereby denied the people a chance to reason out choices on political matters. Under a tyranny the whole idea of rule, which according to our argument belongs in the pre-political household, became the whole way of life. Political action became meaningless without a place in which to exercise it. Speech gave way to force, persuasion to commands. The community itself lost the two opposing, yet coexisting spheres of the household and the polis. Action gave way to obedience, as the community became one big household, each obeying the commands of the new master; the tyrant.

In the next section, sources from ancient Greek literature will be cited to show that tyranny was characterized by the tools of the household master, who ruled with force, who commanded rather than persuaded.

Aeschylus spoke out against tyranny in his poetry and plays. He portrays his tyrants as violent men, using force and unlawful means to achieve control. In Prometheus Bound, Zeus is portrayed as a tyrant who has chained Prometheus to a cliff for disobedience. His two henchmen, Might and Violence, personify the tools of tyranny.

> Might and Violence, in you the command of Zeus has Its perfect fulfillment.[3]

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[3]Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound, lines 11-12.

Hephaestus, the Olympian blacksmith, has been forced to create the unbreakable chains used to bind Prometheus and he makes this clear when he complains to Might: "I am forced to do this; do not keep urging me on."[4] Zeus has had his henchmen drag Prometheus away to the cliffs where he has forced Hephaestus to chain him. There was no choice in the matter.

Zeus' commands, which Prometheus had disobeyed, originated from Zeus' own private rules, and not from any kind of public dialogue. They were merely the whim of a despotic ruler. As the chorus says to Prometheus:

> I see, Prometheus, and a mist of fear and tears
> besets my eyes as I see your form
> wasting away on these cliffs
> in adamantine bonds of bitter shame.
> For new are the steersman that rule Olympus:
> and new are the customs by which Zeus rules,
> customs that have no law to them,
> but what was great before he brings to nothingness.[5]

If Prometheus has been chained to the cliffs for disobeying the rule of a tyrant, there is no justice in it. Zeus has alone decided the fate of Prometheus. The tyrant treated his subjects like the master of the household treated its members. The people either obeyed the tyrant's commands or they were forced to do so.

In the Suppliant Maidens, Aeschylus portrays Egypt

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[4]Ibid., line 72.

[5]Ibid., lines 144-151.

as a tyranny. The fifty daughters of Dansus have come to Argos as suppliants, seeking to avoid a forced marriage to their Egyptian cousins. The Argives are threatened with violence if they do not surrender the suppliants but the Argives will not be forced by the Egyptians. They tell the herald of the Egyptians:

> Why must you tell a name?
> You and your shipmates will know soon enough;
> Though were these willing, with good will of heart,
> You could lead them away, if pious speech
> Persuaded them, thus unanimous the vote
> Decreed never to surrender them to force.
> Joined, doweled and bolted stays the law,
> That neither scratched on tablets, nor book sealed
> You hear announced by the tongue of freedom voice.
> Now get out of my sight![6]

The daughters of Dansus will only be led away if they can be persuaded to go. They will not be surrendered to force; such was the way of freemen. The Egyptians threatened violence to get back the suppliants, instead of using persuasion.

While the way of freeman was to use non-violent actions in the polis, they:

> deemed it the way of wild beasts to be held subject to one another by force, but the duty of men to delimit justice by law and to convince by reason.[7]

Justice was the means to escape the plight of wild beasts

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[6]Aeschylus, The Suppliant Maidens, lines 937-946.

[7]Lysias, Funeral Oration, from Kagan's Sources, p. 133.

and their violence. Men could either be as wild beasts, under tyrannies, or they could live in other ways as true human beings. The ancient Greeks relied on this justice to overcome the use of force. As early as Hesiod, force was seen as being overcome by justice.

> For justice wins over violence
> As they come out in the end.[8]

Justice was not present under a tyranny. The polis was the space for justice. The people had no place to turn to for justice if the tyrant wronged them. There was no enclosed space in which to speak one's defense. Tyrannies, like the Egyptians in Aeschylus' Suppliant Maidens, forced people by violence. The Argives, freemen of the polis, champions of persuasion and justice, do not allow this to happen in their polis.

> Bear not to see
> A suppliant by force
> Led from these statues,
> Seized by my garments
> Like a horse by the bridle.
>
> Do what you will,
> Thy house remains to pay,
> Fined in thy children:
> Justice is equal.
> Mark the justice of Zeus.[9]

Tyranny eliminated the political space of the commun-

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[8]Hesiod, Works and Days, from Kagan's Sources, p. 12.

[9]Aeschylus, Suppliant Maidens, lines 429-438.

ity. Tyranny removed the citizens from the public realm, thereby denying the space for the actions of men to be seen and heard by others. Tyrannies "all have in common the banishment of the citizens from the public realm and the insistance that they mind their own business while only the ruler should attend to public affairs."[10] Tyranny was tantamount to the abolition of the public realm itself.

Tyranny rested on isolation of the tyrant from his subjects and the isolation of the subjects from one another. The tyrant ruled and thereby denied himself the company of his peers. He also prevented the people from coming together and acting on their own initiative. Zeus, the tyrant in Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound, uses forceful means to get his way. He will not even meet with the other Olympians in assembly. Prometheus says of him:

> I know that he is savage; and his justice
> A thing he keeps by his own standard.[11]

Neither will Zeus allow the other gods to meet on their own. The tyrant, to be in complete control, depended upon this two-fold isolation, while he set alone on his throne and made all the decisions.

Alone, the tyrant could make up his own rules, and then force everyone to live by them. Oceanos has tried to persuade Zeus to free Prometheus, but Zeus will not even

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[10]Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 220.

[11]Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound, lines 188-189.

speak to him. Oceanos tells Prometheus:

> This is a tyrant's deed, this is unlovely
> A thing done by a tyrant's private laws.[12]

Tyrannies were felt to operate in this manner. The tyrant kept his own private rules, much like the master of a household used force to rule his slaves. The tyrant did not use the political means of speaking with his fellow freemen, but used the prepolitical means of force to get what he alone wanted.

Prometheus further characterizes tyranny when he explains:

> This is a sickness rooted and inherent
> In the nature of a tyranny:
> That he that holds it does not trust his friends.[13]

This suspicion and fear were supposed to be the result of the isolation and forceful rule of a tyrant. Aristotle sums up the whole thing in the following:

> We have here three principles to which the ordinary policies of tyrants may be reduced--three ideas to which their measures may all be referred:
> 1) to breed mutual distrust among their subjects
> 2) to make them incapable of action and
> 3) to break their spirit.[14]

By isolating himself from his subjects, and by isolating the subjects from themselves, the tyrant bred fear and suspicion

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[12] Ibid., lines 401-402.

[13] Ibid., lines 225-227.

[14] Aristotle, Politics, 1314a16.

among the people. The people were also incapable of action because they had nowhere to meet as a whole. It is as if your neighbor might be a henchman of the tyrant, and ready to do you in; as if everybody was standing around with their hats pulled over their eyes, afraid to talk with their fellow human beings.

There were those who "loved tyranny better than freedom,"[15] and wished to escape the uncertainty of political action. These would have been people more interested in themselves and their private world of things. Tyranny would have allowed these people to isolate themselves in their households and its security, while the tyrant took care of the public realm himself. The people merely had to behave to a set of rules which the tyrant laid down. That is why Arendt says tyranny

> was not one form of government among others, but it contradicted the essential human condition of plurality, the acting and speaking together, which is the condition of all forms of political organization.[16]

Under tyranny there was no real polis at all, because without the space of appearances which tyranny denies, men could not meet together and solve their own political problems; they could not be free to speak together about

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[15]Coulanges, The Ancient City, p. 272.

[16]Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 202.

the common world of things.

The tyrant, by the use of force, destroyed the distinction between the private realm and the public realm. This distinction was originally produced by Greek law, which is discussed in the next chapter. The point here is that the ancient Greek ideal of law was opposed to the use of force. "Force is the negation of law,"[17] Xenophon tells us in his Memorablia. The tyrant made up his own private rules outside of the legal space which was the polis. Without this law to shelter and protect both realms, tyranny invaded the polis with rule.

When Creon, the tyrant in Sophocle's Antigone, commands Antigone not to bury her brother, Sophocles has Antigone speak these words:

> It was not Zeus I think who gives this decreed,
> Nor justice, dweller with Gods below,
> Who made appointment of such laws to men.
> Nor did I think your edicts could override
> The God's unwritten and undying laws.
> Then life is not today and yesterday
> But always and none knows from where they came
> I would not pay the price before the Gods
> Of breaking these for fear of any man.[18]

The command which Antigone defies is not a law in the true sense, but the irresponsible rule of a tyrant. In forbidding burial to a dead man, Creon has defied the religious laws

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[17]Kagan, Sources, p. 245.

[18]Sophocles, Antigone, lines 450-460.

of the community. His edict has no validity or claim to respect, because Greek law was of divine origin. Creon attempts to use force to back up his rules but this was not law, nor was it political action.

Creon was only thinking of himself when he used force to get his way. With all the power in his hands, the ruler did not have to talk with the citizens, and reason out his choices. He had only to decide for himself and force the others to behave to his rules.

Tyranny offered a remedy for the uncertainty of political action. By refusing to speak in public with the other citizens of the city, the tyrant isolated himself from the people and the people from themselves. Political action was impossible in isolation, therefore the political space shrunk to one man. There was nothing uncertain about the rules a tyrant laid down but this process also destroyed the freedom of the polis, because there was no longer a space for the actions of the people to be seen and heard by others; but only the space for the necessities of life.

The tyrant ruled much like the master over his household, but that was just the point. As Arendt argues, rule belonged in the private realm where man's survival was at stake. The public realm was where freedom was enjoyed. Tyranny in effect had no public realm, so there could be no freedom. The tyrant ruled over all; his

subjects were merely slaves, and his state no state at all, but merely a big household.

Only when the polis and the household were sheltered and separated by law, was the polis a place for freedom. Law protected the polis from the rule of the household, while protecting the household from the uncertainty of political action. The polis existed only when the actions and the words of its citizens generated the space. If these deeds and words were prevented from happening, as in the household or a tyranny, there was no polis at all. Law was a boundary between the two realms, separating them, while allowing them to coexist.

We have now seen what isonomia was not. While tyranny was meant for the private realm, isonomia was meant for the public realm. The two realms were opposites, the one harboring rule, the other something different. The next chapter discusses law, which separated the two realms, while providing a space for the activities of each. We have seen what went on in the private realm, and what happened when law no longer separated the two realms, namely tyranny. Now we will see what happened when law did exist to form the wall between the two realms.

CHAPTER IV

LAW

> The only true law is that which leads to freedom.--Richard Bach

We can imagine the ancient Greek people before the polis came into existence, coming together in assemblies, leaving their households and meeting in public places. Over and over again in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, the Greeks met to discuss their common problems. These assemblies created a space much like the later polis would be. This space was not necessarily a physical structure, but rather a space created by actions and words.

> He found the criers with clarion voices and told them to muster the unshorn Akhaians in full assembly. The call sang out, and the men came streaming in; and when they filled the assembly ground, he entered spear in hand.[1]

These ancient assemblies were political, but were not yet a polis. For no sooner had the assembly disbanded, than the political space was destroyed.

> On this note they were quick to end their parley. The assembly broke up; everyone went home.[2]

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[1]Homer, The Odyssey, Bk. II, lines 7-11.

[2]Ibid., lines 260-262.

As the polis came into being, these kinds of meetings represented in the Iliad and Odyssey became enclosed in a kind of wall, first of stone perhaps, but later of written law.[3] This wall-like law gave the political space a permanence it had not had before. On one side of this hedge was enclosed the political life of the community, and on the other side was the private life of the community; the labor and work of men. The law sheltered both sides, but most importantly the law created a permanent political space.

Law, speech, and justice were opposed to the use of force, which characterized life outside the polis. It was law which first walled in the space wherein persuasion and justice were the way the citizens dealt with each other.

> Kyrnos, this city is still the name city,
> but its people are different
> Those who before knew nothing of law suits,
> nothing of laws,
> Who went in goatskins flapping over their shoulders,
> Who lived on the ranges, far out from town,
> like wild deer,
> These are now the Great men, son of Polypas.[4]

Law bounded a space where it was thought men no longer would be as wild beasts; that is they would not be subject to the violence of the private realm.

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[3]Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 64.

[4]Theoginis of Megara, from Lattimore's Greek Lyrics.

Hannah Arendt argues that Greek law (nomos) originally was of a spatial significance, quite literally a wall.[5] The word nomos derives from nemein which means to distribute, to possess (what has been distributed), to dwell.[6] The combination of law and wall is quite manifest in this fragment from Heraclitus: "the people should fight for the law as for a wall."[7] Greek law was like a wall between the private realm and the public realm, sheltering and protecting both realms while separating them from each other. This wall-like law separated the political actions of the polis from the biological life process of the family.

> The law of the city-state was neither the content of political action nor was it a catalogue of prohibitions, resting as all modern laws still do, upon the Thou Shall Nots of the decalogue. It was quite literally a wall without which there might have been an agglomeration of houses, a town (asty) but not a city, a political community. This wall-like law was sacred but only the enclosure was political.[8]

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[5]For example, the Roman word for law, lex, has an entirely different meaning; it indicates a formal relationship between people, that was political, Legislating became the highest political act. In Book IV of his Politics, Aristotle draws the distinction between laws given by specially appointed lawmakers and decrees, given by the assemblies themselves.

[6]Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 63.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid., p. 64.

The law was not an active process, but a static kind of thing, which defined the space for political activity. The polis could not have existed without this boundary, just as a piece of property could not have existed without a hedge to fence it in from the neighboring piece of property.

Greek law was not a day to day affair. We tend to be more casual about our kind of law, which like Roman law, is an ongoing political process. Greek law, on the other hand, made the city.

> With cunning beyond belief,
> In subtle inventions of art,
> He goes his way now to evil, now to good.
> When he keeps the laws of the land
> And the God's rule which he has sworn to hold,
> High is his city. No city has he
> Who in rash effrontery
> Makes wrong-doing his fellow.[9]

A city's laws were like a piece of art, to be held up and admired. Law was a piece of architecture which made the city beautiful.

Like art, law gave something that would otherwise have existed only for a moment, a kind of permanence; an immortality. Law gave the polis a permanence the town assemblies did not have before. It formed a relatively permanent wall around the political actions that went on from time to time in the towns and villages. Law bounded a space where the deeds and words of men appeared before

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[9]Sophocles, Antigone, lines 365-367.

the public and were remembered by them and passed on to the next generation.

Greek law in distinction from all later developments was not a political phenomenon and law making was not a political act. Before the freemen of a town could begin to act and speak as equals in a polis, a lawmaker had to be commissioned to give the laws. The lawmaker was commissioned as an architect might be, to draw up this wall. "The lawmaker was like the builder of a city wall, someone who had to do and finish his work before the political activity could begin."[10] The lawmaking was not a political act in itself, but created the space for political action.

Aristotle, in his Athenian Constitution, talks about the lawmakers of Athens, and how they gave their laws to the city. Solon, for example, was commissioned by Athens to make laws to end political strife. Aristotle points out that Solon could have made himself tyrant, but that he did not.

> Solon, however, set himself against both parties and while he would have been able to rule as a tyrant if he had been willing to conspire with whichever party he wished, he preferred to antagonize both factions while saving the country and giving it the laws that were best for it, under the circumstances.[11]

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[10]Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 194.

[11]Aristotle, Athenian Constitution, ch. 11.

Rather than ruling the Athenians, Solon gave them the laws by means of which to work out their own problems. He did not take part in the political process of the polis, but stood apart from it and made his laws, laws which Aristotle tells us "can only lay down the general rules,"[12] Solon, in talking about his laws, said: "I saw to it that they should suffer no injustice. I stood covering both parties with a strong shield, permitting neither to triumph unjustly."[13] After he finished his work, Solon left Athens for ten years, fearing his prestige would interfere in the political process, which suggests again the wall-like character of law. Solon did not see himself as involved in the political struggle, but rather as involved in providing a shield, or a wall.

If law was a wall, it was a wall of written words. What was originally only the knowledge of a few, as under eunomia, the rule of law, once written down became equal for all. When Solon gave his laws in the relatively permanent form of the written word, everyone could have access to them. The walls became visible to all, and thus enclosed a larger space. In a scene from Euripides' The Suppliant Women, a herald from Thebes confronts Theseus, the legendary

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[12]Aristotle, Politics, 1286a4.

[13]Finley, The Ancient Greeks, p. 26.

founder of Athenian democracy. They hold a brief conversation in which the herald challenges and Theseus defends democracy. Theseus says:

> What bombast from a herald! Waster of words,
> If it is argument you want--and you yourself
> Have set the battle going--listen. Nothing
> Is worse for a city than an absolute ruler.
> In earliest times, before there are common laws
> One man has power and makes his own laws,
> Equality is not yet. With written law,
> People of few resources and the rich
> Both have the same recourse to justice. Now
> A man of means, if badly spoken of,
> Will have no better standing than the weak;
> And if the lesser is in the right, he wins
> Against the great. This is the call of freedom:
> "What man has good advice to give the city,
> And wishes to make it known?" He who responds
> Gains glory.[14]

Written law provided equality within the polis. Before there was written law, Euripides said there was tyranny where one man ruled by his own private rules. Written law, on the other hand, allowed all men to take part in the political realm, because within the perimeter of law all were equal and, therefore, free to speak their thoughts.

Under eunomia, however, the walls were only visible for a few, the aristocracy. Eunomia was originally a radical slogan against the arbitrary rule of kings, so it did enlarge the walls to a certain extent. The aristocracy cried out for eunomia to escape the prepolitical rule of

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[14]Euripides, Suppliant Maidens, lines 399-462.

monarchy.[15] It is as if they said, "this one man shall not rule us, but these laws shall." What these good laws did was to enclose a larger space so the aristocracy was free to act politically and keep out the prepolitical force of the private realm.

Aristotle defines eunomia as meaning "rightly constituted law should be the final sovereign," and elsewhere he said that "where no nomoi rule there is no politeia."[16] Eunomia meant that no one man should rule, but that law should rule. If law was not ruling, there was no politeia, no political body, no citizens. The action of the citizens was to follow the general rules laid out by law, but this law was not absolute. Aristotle in his discussion on whether the rule of law is better than the rule of the one best (monarchy) wrote that under eunomia "the people are all freemen, do nothing contrary to the law, and only act outside it in matters which law by its nature is obliged to omit."[17] Eunomia did give a number of people a measure of freedom, but law was to rule them, and besides only the upperclasses were free from rule. They could only act where law failed to hit and mark, or omitted something all together.

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[15]Finley, The Ancient Greeks, p. 41.

[16]Aristotle, Politics, 1282b19 and 1292a32.

[17]Ibid., 1286a9.

The rule of law lifted the upperclasses out of a life of survival in the private realm into the freedom of the public realm.

> He who commands that law should rule, may thus be regarded as commanding that God and reason alone should rule, he who commands that a man should rule adds the character of the beast.[18]

The character of the beast, we must remember, was to be subject to the use of force, and force meant the despotic rule of a master over his household, or a tyrant over his subjects.

Though eunomia, "the well-ordered state, ruled by law, was itself a revolutionary slogan," it came under attack from the people who replied with isonomia.[19] The rule of law lifted some from the arbitrary rule of others, but all were not equal before this law. "For while the Greeks of the liberation hailed nomos as their charter, setting them free from the arbitrary rule of a tyrant, a new generation sprang up and began to see that nomos itself may be tyranny."[20] Law had become the tyrant itself. Good laws had given way to good order. Instead of law allowing for political action, the upperclasses used law to keep order; to prohibit some from political action. Under eunomia all did not have the right to speak in the polis. The people cried out for isonomia, equality before the law. We can think of isonomia as enlarging the boundary around the

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[18] Ibid., 1287a5.

[19] Finley, The Ancient Greeks, p. 42.

[20] T. A. Sinclair, A History of Greek Political Thought (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1967), p. 35.

polis to include all freemen together, not just the upper-classes. Within these walls all were free from arbitrary rule, for the reason that all were equal in the political space.

As early as Solon, equality before the law was important. Aristotle quotes Solon as saying of his laws: "Equal laws I gave to evil and to good, with even hand drawing justice for the lot of each.[21] According to Aristotle the most praiseworthy of Solon's laws were the laws 1) that nobody could contract a loan secured on his person, 2) that anyone could claim redress on behalf of a person who had been wronged, and 3) the right to appeal to jury court. All these laws have in common the advancement of the idea of a community where the aristocracy is prevented from exercising extra-legal powers; they were steps toward equality before the law. Aristotle said that this kind of law "declares equality to mean that the poor are to count no more than the rich; neither is to be sovereign, and both are to be on a level."[22] It was Solon's laws which declared equality, for law laid down the general structure of the polis.

Thucydides has Pericles praise the Athenian constitution for its equality before the law.

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[21]Aristotle, The Athenian Constitution, ch. 9.

[22]Aristotle, Politics, 1291b22.

> Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority, but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling disputes, everyone is equal before the law.[23]

In Athens there were to be no arbitrary rules made to settle disputes. Instead, all were equal before the law, and free to act out the solutions themselves.

The great Athenian democratic orator, Demosthenes, points out the equality of law. Law (nomos) is contrasted to nature (physis).

> Be the polis in which they have their abode great or be it small, men's lives are all controlled by nature and by nomos. Nature is something particular to each man; nomoi something common something identical for all men. Nature if it be evil often wishes for evil things; and you will therefore find men of that type doing wrong. Nomoi wish for the just and good and the beneficial: this is what they seek; and this is what, when once it was found, was shown to men as a common injunction, equal for all and alike for all.[24]

This not only points out the equality before the law, the isonomia, which was essential to the polis, but also the basic dialectic in ancient Greek political theory. Law was the boundary, the wall, which structured this dialectic. Law was set up so men could meet as equals for in nature, in the household and family, they were unequal. While tyranny was an association built on the 'natural' inequality

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[23]Thucydides (ii, 34-38).

[24]See the introduction to Barker's translation of Aristotle's Politics for a discussion of this distinction.

of the household and knew no law, isonomia was an association of free individuals based on the equality given by law. Law walled out the inequality of the private realm, while it walled in the equality of political rights of the public realm.

The speaking inside the walls of the polis, the call of freedom, as Euripides called it, was the content of political action. Since law was a static thing, a piece of architecture, a wall if you will, it was the freemen's actions which were to be the important activity of the polis. "There were no precedents to fall back on."[25] This gave the citizens the freedom to act out their own solutions to political matters. Once the laws had walled in a particular space, what actually took place was up to the actions and speech of the freemen. Law was prepolitical, but it created a space for political action.

Aristotle once wrote: "Man when perfected is the best of animals; but if he is isolated from law and justice, he is the worst of all."[26] Man when perfected is not isolated from law and justice, but lives within the polis which was walled in by law. We have seen how law set up the space for political action. Justice is the complement

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[25]Finley, The Ancient Greeks, p. 25.

[26]Aristotle, Politics, 1253a15.

to law in action. Where law sets up the general rules, justice "is an ordering of the political association" by individual actions. Law speaks either by some ancient written code or by some old and unwritten custom; justice is a contemporary action. "Dike (justice) is a showing of what is right in particular cases; nomos (law) is a general formulation or assignments of positions. Dike moves and bends to the case, nomos has the rigidity of a general rule."[27]

Before there was codified law, the Greek community did not emerge from its embryonic state in which the arbitrary rule of a few families controlled the political space. Hesiod called these people 'bribe-eating judges' because justice was not equal but was 'dragged away' for personal gain.

> Tumult arises when justice is dragged
> away and whenever
> Eaters of bribes seize her, and give
> doom by crooked decisions.[28]

Without equal justice there is violence, but law set up the space where all had an equal chance to speak on his choice of action.

Isonomia, by calling for equality before the law and the resultant freedom, also called for equal justice.

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[27] Ibid., p. lxxi.

[28] Hesiod, Works and Days from Kagan's Sources, p. 14.

As Aristotle wrote in his Politics, "the good in the sphere of politics is justice; and justice consists in what tends to promote the common interest. General opinion makes it consist in some sort of equality."[29] Equal justice was the good in the sphere of politics, but justice was decided by the actions of the citizens walled in by law; citizens who met as equals to act and speak together. The next chapter discusses the actions of the citizens inside the wall-like law of the polis.

[29]Aristotle, Politics, 1282b14.

CHAPTER V

ACTION

According to Aristotle, what makes it worthwhile for men to live together in a polis is the "sharing of words and deeds."[1] Both action and speech need the presence of others to exist at all. While these two activities are the exclusive prerogatives of man, other activities were, of course, necessary for the survival of the species, but these activites belonged to the realm of the household.

> Of all the activities necessary and present in human communities, only two were deemed to be political, and to constitute what Aristotle called the bios politikos, namely action (praxis) and speech (lexis) out of which arises the realm of human affairs.[2]

Although law was prepolitical, it walled in the space for the political activity of speech. Isonomia, as equality before the law, meant then that all citizens who crossed over the walls of law, from the household into the polis, became equal to each other while within the walls. They were equal in their capacity to sympathize and cooperate with each other on political matters, by speaking with

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[1]Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1126b12.

[2]Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 24.

each other in public. This was the bios politikos.

Man in his private life was 'idiotic'--that is he was removed from the reality of the political realm. Those outside of the polis, the slaves and barbarians, were deprived of the political way of life. They were aneu logou, deprived not of the faculty of speech in itself, but deprived of a way of life in which speech and only speech made sense and where the central concern of all citizens was to talk to each other. Life outside the polis walls was concerned with the behavior of the people to a set of conventions. They were driven out of necessity to obey the commands of a master of the household or the ruler of a tyranny. There was no walled in space in which the people were free to speak their thoughts.

A slave is he who cannot speak his thought.--Euripides

Political action, insofar as it remained enclosed from the sphere of violence by the wall-like law, was to be transacted in words. Aristotle felt that it was the faculty of speech that made man a political being.

> The reason why man is a being meant for political association in a higher degree than bees or other gregarious animals can ever associate is evident. Nature, according to our theory makes nothing in vain; and man alone of the animals is furnished with the faculty of language.[3]

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[3]Aristotle, Politics, 1253a10-12.

Of course, other animals can make sounds to communicate. These sounds, however, were only of a biological nature and did not constitute speech, which was necessary for the life of the polis.

> The mere making of sounds serves to indicate pleasure and pain, and is thus the faculty that belongs to animals in general: their nature enables them to attain the point at which they have perceptions of pleasure and pain, and can signify those preceptions to one another.[4]

Language can do more than this. It allows man to choose between various choices offered to him. It allows man to group together with other men in a political association of a high degree. Where an animal can only signify pleasure or pain, a man can signify what he considers right or wrong.

> But language serves to declare what is advantageous and what is the reverse, and it therefore serves to declare what is just and unjust. It is the peculiarity of man, in comparison with the rest of the world, that he alone possesses a perception of good and evil, of the just and unjust, and of other similar qualities; and it is association in these things which makes a polis.[5]

Through the use of speech man can act out choices of what is just and unjust, good and evil. These activites constituted the action within the wall-like laws of the polis.

Thucydides reflects this importance of speech to

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

the polis in Pericles' funeral oration. Pericles has been talking about the way of life that has made Athens great. One of the ways that has made Athens great, Thucydides has Pericles say, is:

> We Athenians in our persons, take our decisions on policy and submit them to proper discussions: For we do not think that there is an incompatability between words and deeds; the worst thing is to rush into action before the consequences have been properly debated.[6]

Political action, what went on inside the walls of the polis, was speech. It was here that the freemen met and discussed their common problems. Questions of policy were discussed among all the citizens together.

Politics was not an affair of rules and behavior to these rules, rather the freemen talked things over, and reasoned with one another. Speech brought the truth to light. Fustel de Coulanges, in The Ancient City, wrote of the Athenians:

> The Athenians, as Thucydides says, did not believe that words could damage action. On the contrary, they felt the need of being enlightened. Politics were no longer an affair of tradition and faith. Men reflected and weighed reason. Discussion was necessary and discussion alone could bring the truth to light. The Athenian people desired every question presented in all its different phases and to have both sides clearly shown.[7]

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[6]Thucydides (ii, 41.)

[7]Coulanges, The Ancient City, p. 332.

Since each person sees and hears from different points of view, the Athenians spent a lot of time talking in the polis. It was important to the Greeks, trying to be free from rule. The political process of the polis depended on the political action of speech to prevent the personal ambitions of those who desired power for themselves from corrupting them into using force instead of persuasion. As Thucydides says:

> Anyone who maintains that words cannot be a guide to action must be either a fool or one with some personal interests at stake; he is a fool if he imagines that it is impossible to deal with the uncertainties of the future by any other medium.[8]

Dialogue in the polis was a means by which to determine the proper choices to make. Everyone had the right to speak his cause before the other citizens.

In Aeschylus' The Suppliant Maidens, which we have discussed before, Pelasgus cannot make a decision before he speaks with all the citizens in assembly.

> It is not my house at whose hearth you
> sit, and if
> The Argive State stands liable to guilt therein,
> The people of Argos must together work its cure.
> Therefore, I'll undertake no pledge till I have heard
> This issue in full council with my citizens.[9]

This gave each citizen a chance to persuade the others to his point of view. The suppliants must wait until the

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[8]Thucydides (ii.42).

[9]Aeschylus, The Persians, lines 591-596.

freemen of the assembly talk it over. Pelasgus, even though he was the archon, could not force his point of view on the citizens.

In Sophocle's Oedipus the King, Oedipus has saved the city and has been made king of Thebes. The city is, however, being decimated from some unknown cause. Tiresias, the blind soothsayer, is asked for guidance. He angers Oedipus, but he answers in return:

> Perhaps you are a king, but I reign too,
> in speech. I'll have my equal say.
> I'm not your servant.[10]

Tiresias implies that Oedipus is being prepolitical by treating him as a servant and not letting him have his right to speak before the assembly: Freedom of speech was guaranteed to all freemen in the Polis. All were equal in their right to speak before their fellow citizens.

The whole of Greek public life was characterized by freedom of speech. The victory over the Persians at Salamis was seen by Aeschylus as a victory of freedom of speech which would have been destroyed by Persian rule.

> Now fear no more shall bridle speech;
> Uncurbed, the common people shall prate
> Of freedom; for the yoke of State
> Lies broken on the bloody beach
> And fields of Salamis, which hide
> The ruins of our Persian pride.[11]

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[10]Sophocles, Oedipus the King, p. 39.

[11]Aeschylus, The Persians, lines 591-596.

The rule of the Persians would have allowed only the rulers to discuss political matters. The ancient Greeks felt it was the right of all the people to speak in public on political matters.

> And I remember in frequent discourses with my master concerning the nature of manhood, in other parts of the world; having occasion to talk of lying and false representation, it was with much difficulty that he comprehended what i meant, although he had otherwise an acute judgement. For he argued thus; that the use of speech was to make us understand one another, and to receive information of facts; not if anyone said the thing which was not, their ends were defeated.--Jonathan Swift

Along with freedom of speech went a respect for the truth. Perhaps no other western people found it more offensive to lie. What was the use of speech as political action if the truth was not told? "The truth is always best,"[18] Sophocles tells us. Pindar said of truth:

> Forge thy tongue on an anvil of truth
> And what flies up, though it be but a spark,
> Shall have weight.[12]

and elsewhere:

> Mistress of high achievement, O lady truth,
> do not let my understanding stumble
> across some jagged falsehood.[13]

If speech and persuasion had any worth at all, the truth had to be its content. Truth seems to have been well

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[12]Edith Hamilton, The Greek Way (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1930), p. 61.

[13]Richard Lattimore, ed. and trans., Greek Lyrics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 63.

respected. It was this capacity to keep everything out front, in the open, totally honest, that was central to the political realm. If the use of speech was to discover good and evil, what was just and unjust, the truth had to be presented. If falsehoods were presented, there would be no speech at all.

If the polis was a place of freedom, then all the freemen had to participate in the public life of the community. The result was the rule of one, few or many if only some participated. Without this responsibility for political action, some people ended up being ruled by others. Freedom not only meant the absence of rule, but also the responsibility to act. Without the deeds and words of men, there was no polis at all.

It was dangerous for freemen not to participate in the actions of the polis. Aristotle tells of a law made by Solon:

> Solon made a special law for persons of this kind [those who refused to act and speak in the polis] enacting that whoever, in a time of political strife, did not take an active part on either side would be deprived of his civic rights and have no share in the state.[14]

Solon made his laws so the Athenian not only could take an active part in the public life, but that he had a respon-

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[14]Aristotle, Athenian Constitution, ch. 8.

sibility to do so. By talking about things in the public realm, persuading and reasoning out differences, the citizens were kept from resorting to violence. During this time in Athens, citizens could even be fined for not participating in the councils and assemblies.

> The new factor in the development of the city-state, what at last makes everyman a political being, was the compulsion laid on each male citizen to take an active part in the life of his community, and to recognize and accept his civic duties--which were quite different from his duties as a private person and workingman.[15]

It was each citizen's community only if he was active in it. The polis was made up of his words and deeds along with those of the rest of the citizens. To ignore his duties as a public person was to destroy the political community.

In a reference from Thucydides, Pericles describes the Athenian citizen as a freeman, actively involved in the public realm. Those who for private gain do not participate in politics, he says, have no right to be in the polis.

> We do not say that a man who takes no interst in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say he has no business here at all.[16]

To speak in the public realm was to be the business of the Athenian citizen. The ancient Greeks had a responsibility to participate in the public discussions. The responsibility

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[15]Jaegar, Paideia, p. 88.

[16]Thucydides (ii, 38-41). In more recent times, political action became a techne, a profession, the business of a few professionals.

of the community was to be in the hands of all the freemen.

> The tyranny of this dictatorship isn't primarily the fault of Big Business, nor of the demagogues who do their dirty work. It's the fault of Doremus Jessups! Of all the conscientious, respectable, lazy minded Doremus Jessups, who have let the demagogues wriggle in, without fierce enough protest.--Sinclair Lewis

This responsibility to participate in the political action of the polis took great courage. One of the classic forms of political excellence, according to Aristotle, was courage.

> It is not wolves, or other savage animals that will fight a good fight in the presence of a noble danger; it is the man who is of a good courage.[17]

It took courage for the Greeks to leave the safety of their households, and enter the noble dangers of the public realm. The Greeks had the valor; and during a time when the rest of the world was shrouded in fear, the Greeks "changed a world full of fear, into a world full of beauty."[18] This was why courage was one of the original forms of political excellence. We think of only heroes as being courageous but Homer used the term hero (hērōs) merely as a name given each freeman who participated in the Trojan enterprise.[19]

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[17]Aristotle, Politics, 1338b5.

[18]Hamilton, The Greek Way, p. 176.

[19]See Herodotus, ch. vi and vii for the entire battle.

To leave the household and to devote one's life to the affairs of the polis demanded courage because only in the household was one concerned with one's survival. To enter the public realm, one had to be ready to risk his life and without it one could not leave a life of necessity for the freedom of the public realm. Only those who had the courage to live a life away from the security of the household, could be admitted to a "fellowship that was political in content and purpose and thereby transcended the mere togetherness imposed on all--slaves, barbarians, and Greeks alike--through the urgencies of life."[20] Political man thus needed the courage to overcome the innate urge of all animals to care only for their own survival. Once he did so he was no longer tied to the biological life process and could enter the public realm where he could enjoy the freedom of the world.

The freeman also needed the courage to face the uncertainties of political action. Though law attempted to place a boundary around the actions of the citizens, it never could quite overcome the boundlessness of action. Every time someone acted he set in motion a new beginning, and there was no way to tell exactly where it would lead. Action by its very nature establishes new relationships;

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[20] Ibid.

and isonomia allowed all the freemen to act in the polis. The consequences were always unpredictable. Law somewhat contained this chaos, but everyone sees and hears from a different position, so the chaos always continued. It took courage to live with this uncertainty, for no one knew one day what would happen the next, except that they would be free.

Somewhat paradoxically, what finally made the uncertainty of political life bearable, was that each had his own private world, his household, into which he could escape. The two spheres of the household and the polis went hand in hand. The wall-like law which separated the realms at least protected the private realm from the uncertainties of public life. Each citizen could escape into a place all his own, with its relative peace and quiet.

While it took courage to enter the public realm and to make it a place of freedom, it took a brave spirit for the Greeks to defend this freedom against the overwhelming odds of the invasion of the tyrannical Persians. Other cities quickly surrendered, but the Athenians would not.

Herodotus tells the story of a Persian official who was urging some Greeks to submit to him. They answered this Persian by saying: "Freedom you have never tried,

to know how sweet it is. If you had you would have urged us to fight not with our spears only, but even with our hatchets."[21] They did not want to be ruled by a tyrant. They would fight for their freedom with undying courage.

When the Athenians resisted the attack of the Persians, they showed the courage it took to preserve the freedom they possessed. When Xerxes offered the Athenians surrender terms, he offered them much but not their freedom. They answered him: "tell the General that the Athenians say as long as the sun moves in his present course, we will never come to terms with Xerxes."[22] Later, just before the Persian attack at Salamis, the Greek leaders, chosen in assembly by their fellow freemen, told their men, "when we join in battle, before all else remember freedom."[23] Aeschylus, who was there, has them shouting, as they advanced upon the foe:

> For freedom, sons of Greece
> Freedom for country, children, wives
> Freedom for worship, for our father's graves.[24]

It was the courage of the citizens, who were now engaged in battle, that also set up the polis and its freedom.

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Herodotus (vii).

[23] Ibid., (ii, 41).

[24] Aeschylus, The Persians, lines 401-403.

It was this same courage which was to protect their freedom from the rule of the Persians. What they resisted at Salamis, was what Prometheus resisted alone on the cliff; the forceful rule of a tyrant. The Persian army was an army of slaves, forced on by tyrannical powers. Several times Herodotus pictures the Persian army being whipped on into battle from behind, while the Athenian army courageous and free, marches forward to meet the foe.[25] What they were resisting was slavery, where one was ruled by despotic forces. They were defending a way of life, where freedom was directly opposed to the Persian tyranny.

The Athenians were freemen, they were brave men. Courage was inherent in the Greek's way of life. "Make up your minds that happiness depends on being free, and freedom depends on being courageous."[26]

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[25]Herodotus (vi).

[26]Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Creation is a marvel
And man its masterpiece:
He scuds before the southern wind
Between the loud white-piling swell.
He drives his thoroughbreds
Through Earth (perpetual
Great goddess inexhaustible)
Exhausting her each year.

The light-balanced light-headed birds
He snares; wild beasts according to their kind.
In his nets the deep sea fish are caught--
O master mind of Man!
The free forest animal he herds,
The roaming upland deer.
The shaggy horse he breaks to yoke
The mountain-powered bull.

He's trained his agile thoughts
(Volatile as air)
To civilizing words.
He's roofed against the sky
The javelin crystal frosts
The arrow-lancing rains.
All fertile in resource
He's provident for all
(Not beaten by disease)
All but death, and death--
He never cures.

Beyond imagining he's wise
Through labyrinthine ways both good and bad;
Distinguished in his city when
He is law-abiding, pious;
But displaced when he promotes
Unsavory ambition.
And, then, I want no part with him,
No parcel of his thoughts.

> In his two years of dictatorship,
> Berzilius Windrip daily became more
> of a miser of power. And daily he
> wanted louder, more convincing Yeses
> from everybody about him.--Sinclair Lewis

Around 430 B.C. Pericles of Athens had said: "Although only a few may originate a policy, we are all able to judge it."[1] This contrasts so sharply with the tyrannies which followed the fall of Periclean Athens. During the late sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Athens had been a place of political freedom, with all citizens alike interacting in the polis. Each freeman was capable of acting independently initiating new ideas or judging those of others. But something happened to this freedom, this idea of no-rule: within a generation political freedom had been replaced by the rule of kings, of emperors.

What appears to have finally destroyed the freedom of the Athenian polis was the greed for power that corrupted even the worthiest of intentions. Athens had created an empire after she had defeated Persia. At first she had resisted the temptations of power, but finally she submitted. It was inevitable. The joy that is written into Herodotus' history of the defeat of the tyrannical Persians and the blossoming of freedom, is absent from the pages of Thucydides' history of the by now tyrannical Athenians. Thucydides has

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[1]Thucydides (ii,41).

Pericles give this warning to the Athenians:

> Do not think you are fighting for the simple issue of letting this or that state become free or remain subject to you. You have an empire to lose. You must realize that Athens has a mighty name in the world because she has never yielded to misfortune and had today the greatest power that exists. To be hated has always been the lot of those who have aspired to rule over others. In face of that hatred you cannot give up your power--even if some sluggards and cowards are all for being noble at this crisis. Your empire is a tyranny by now, perhaps, as many think wrongfully acquired, but certainly dangerous to let go.[2]

While trying to spread their way of life to other cities, the Athenians had become corrupted by the power they gained over others. The temptation to acquire more power had, as always, proved irresistible.

Herodotus believed that the concentration of power corrupted a tyrant, and caused him to become a violent and forceful person. It was not so much that the Greeks mistrusted power; power generated by the speaking together of citizens kept the polis together. What they feared was the power of the whole body-politic concentrated in the hands of one or a few. This concentrated power was bound to corrupt the tyrant. Herodotus has Otanes, the spokesman for isonomia explain it this way:

> Such license is enough to stir strange and unwanted thoughts in the hearts of the most worthiest of men. Give a person this power

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[2] Ibid., (ii,65).

> and straight away his manifold good things puff up with pride, while envy is so natural to human kind that it cannot but arise in him. But pride and envy together include all wickedness, both leading to savage violence.[3]

Tyranny led to a state of violence. Power degenerated into force and violence when it was no longer the product of men's deeds and words in public life, but the creation of 'pride' and 'envy.' The tyrant might even have started out as a very just person, but the tyrant's power corrupted him.

With tyranny "the love of power, operating through personal ambition was the cause of these evils,"[4] namely the conditions of force and violence. The tyrant was an egoist whose "first thought was always for himself."[5] With his pride inflated he no longer cared for the community as a place for citizens to come together and share in the problems of living together. The tyrant was self-oriented; his policies were directed at gaining absolute power for himself. The people were only pawns. Power, Thucydides wrote, created the desire for more power. There was no right power for him, because power, whoever wielded it, was evil, the corruptor of men.

One hundred and fifty years earlier, Solon had said

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[3]Herodotus (iii,80).

[4]Thucydides (iii,82).

[5]Ibid., (i,17).

the same thing. He saw as Thucydides was to see, that power worked out in evil and that the greed for power destroyed the polis.

> Men are driven on by greed to win wealth in unrighteous ways, and he who has most wealth covets twice as much. Powerful men pull the city down.[6]

This concentrated power, based on the wealth of the household, eventually led to the corruption of the ruler and the state. Great power brought on its own destruction and soon enough the tyranny itself would be destroyed. So it happened to Athens.

The poet, Aeschylus, wrote of the fate of those who wielded too great a power. The Gods, he wrote, hated this arrogance of power, and they passed harsh judgment over those who became too greedy for more.

> All arrogance will reap a harvest rich in teach,
> God calls men to a heavy reckoning
> For overweening pride.[7]

He almost foresaw the bitter fate of the Athenians, who in the pride their great strength inspired, initiated the imperialism which destroyed their way of life.

What had been "the fairest of names" and that most "beautiful word"--isonomia--became a joking matter just a

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[6]Solon, frg. 3.

[7]Aeschylus, The Persians, lines 820-823.

generation after Athens fell. Plato, in his discussion of democracy and freedom in the Republic, makes a farce of freedom.

> No one who had not seen it would believe how much more freedom the domestic animals enjoy in a democracy than elsewhere. The very dogs behave as if the proverb 'like mistress like maid' applied to them; and the horse and donkeys catch the habit of walking down the street with all the dignity of freemen, running into everyone who does not get out of their way. The whole place is simply bursting with the spirit of freedom.[8]

Equality and freedom, once a way of life in the polis, became a farcical situation, a matter of animals running wild in the streets.

The absence of rule, a state without an all powerful leader led to uncertainty and chaos, said the political thinkers such as Plato. Under isonomia the freeman would "spend his days indulging in the pleasure of the moment,"[9] but it was exactly this chaos that was important to the political realm. In their capacity to make and judge political decisions all freemen were equal under isonomia. This freedom to act politically led to an open community that was certainly chaotic, yet limited to a certain level of reality by the wall-like law. Even so this equality before the law became associated with mob violence.

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[8]Plato, The Republic (viii, 563).

[9]Ibid., (viii, 561).

The proponents of rule, on the other hand, isolated individuals from themselves and from each other. They invented a million ways to tell people apart but forgot that everyone should be equal in their ability to control their own actions. Suddenly man had a leader, a big brother to tell him what to do on every occasion. It became the responsibility of a few professionals to decide the policies of a people.

The people under the rule of these leaders, became apathetic about political life, and sunk deeper and deeper in the quagmire of private life as they slipped into acceptance of their serfdom. They were told from birth that they are not responsible to act in public affairs--leave it up to the government, they were told. The overriding problem became again a matter of survival. They had no control over the policy decisions which decide their fate as private individuals.

Against the supposed violence and uncertainty of action, political thought brought from the private realm, as it were, the concept of rule. To escape the responsibilities of action, as the ancients knew it, some decided it would be better to let a few rule and the rest be ruled. They wished to escape from the basin of politics altogether, so they made it the responsibility of only a few or even one to decide on questions of right and wrong. What was once

only the prerogative of a master over his household, now was the right of the ruler over his subjects.

> The greatest principle of all is that nobody, whether male or female, should be without at leader. Nor should the mind of anybody be habituated to letting him do anything at all on his own initiative; neither out of zeal nor even playfully. But in war and in peace--to his leader he shall direct his eye and follow him faithfully. And even in the smallest matter he should stand under leadership. For example he should get up, or move, or wash or take his meals only if he has been told to do so. In a word, he should teach his soul, by long habit never to dream of acting independently and to become utterly incapable of it.[10]

Plato of Athens, not even a generation after the fall of the Athenian polis had already denied the freedom that was part of the political life of each freeman.

The action that originally went on inside the walls of the polis was the words of the freeman talking about common problems. Any force or violence or rule was completely out of place. Men were to persuade through speech, to reason out their choices among themselves in public life which was lived out in the open. What one felt or thought was freely expressed in completely honest dialogues out where all could interact. Each person had a responsibility to participate in the open community forum, no public life

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[10]As Karl Pepper paraphrases Plato on page 7 of the Open Society and Its Enemies.

was exposed to the actions of everyone of the citizens.

Greek law originally walled in this space for action. It protected it from the competition and violence of the private realm, where men did not act but conformed to a set of rules. The whole idea of the polis was based on an escape from the violence and rule of the private realm, into the freedom of the public realm. Law secured a space in which the political activities of speech and persuasion could take place, without interfering with the life of survival in the household.

The emphasis on the actions of all freemen being freely exercised in the open spaces leads to the conclusion that isonomia, equality before the law, also meant no-rule as Hannah Arendt argues. Within the polis walls no one was to rule or be ruled; rather on this level all were equal with one another and free to speak their thoughts on political matters. Thucydides' Otanes expressed this idea when he said he wished neither rule or be ruled. Each citizen, by being free from necessity and being free from rule, was free to act and speak in public.

Actually, equality before the law said the same thing. All freemen were to be equal while within the law of the polis. This meant that no one ruled over others inside this space. Equality before the law gave the Greeks

political freedom. What made the Greek citizen free was that he only had to deal with his equals, and could thus be assured that no one would rule over him.

Rule, on the other hand, was connected with the strictest inequality. Men were not free in the private realm because they were ruled by necessity and by a leader. The master of the household ruled with tyrannical powers; he commanded and people obeyed. The members of the household were not equal with one another because only one or a few made the decisions, while the rest were forced to behave accordingly.

Yet the Greeks needed both realms at the same time. Without a private space in the world, a place of one's own, where one mastered the necessities of life by violence, by ruling and being ruled, the Greek citizen was not free to spend his life in the common world of things, among his peers in the polis. Also, he needed an occasional escape from the chaos of action in the polis, into the quiet and order of the household, his sanctuary in the world. The polis could not have been a place of freedom without the household to provide the necessities of life. If law was a wall, then it separated and sheltered both realms from one another. It kept the rule of household out of the polis, and the uncertainty of action from the life of necessity. The wall-like law allowed both realms to

coexist; it thus insured the co-existence of the life of survival with the freedom of the world.

Political thought has since that time turned away from action. Political scientists have forgotten that though we are all different we are still the same in our capacity to be political. To be political requires the absence of rule, yet political thought since Plato has assumed that some must rule and others must obey. The study of politics has actually become the study of means by which to escape from political action altogether, for political scientists now study the behavior of people to the rules of governments, where freedom is a freedom from the responsibility of action. The political associations they study are actually not political at all in the original sense of the word; rather they are methods of administering a giant household. We have thus lost the true meanings of our political language which is found not in a political science book, but in the plays and poetry and histories of ancient Greece.

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